

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KATHMA 00847 241135Z

43

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SUBJECT PRIME MINISTER ON FOREIGN POLICY

1. PRIME MINISTER TULSI GIRI IN ADDRESS FEBRUARY 18 TO NEPAL COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS REITERATED NEPAL'S INTEREST IN OBTAINING SUPPORT FOR ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL. ACCORDING TO GIRI, HMG RECOGNIZES "GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF NEPAL TO NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES AND THEREFORE WISHES TO OFFER NEPAL "AS A SPHERE OF ABSTENTION FROM RIVALRY OF OTHER NATIONS." HE STATED THAT BY DOING SO HMG HAD NO DESIRE TO "TRANSFORM EXISTING AFFAIRS OF THE REGION," NOR ALTER NEPAL'S POLICIES OF NON-ALIGNMENT. FURTHERMORE THE ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL WAS NOT DESIGNED TO "BALANCE OR TILT ONE COUNTRY AGAINST THE OTHER."

2. GIRI ALSO SAID THAT RELATIONS WITH INDIA, DESPITE DIFFERENCES COMMON TO NEIGHBORING STATES, HAD DEMONSTRATED A "REMARKABLE RESILIENCY" OVER THE YEARS. THE PRIME MINISTER NOTED THAT FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING "THE FRIENDLIEST OF ATMOSPHERES." THIS, IN GIRI'S VIEW, WILL REQUIRE "DELINKING" POLITICAL QUESTIONS FROM OTHER AREAS OF THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING AID AND ECONOMIC

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PAGE 02 KATHMA 00847 241135Z

QUESTIONS.

3. AS FOR CHINA, GIRI SAID ONLY THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEPAL AND ITS NORTHERN NEIGHBOR HAS BEEN AN EXAMPLE OF FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN STATES BASED ON AN UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S VIEWS.

4. GIRI DID NOT ELABORATE ON MULTILATERAL QUESTIONS BEYOND REAFFIRMING HMG'S SUPPORT FOR BOTH THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND THE UNITED NATIONS. HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT DETENTE BETWEEN MAJOR POWERS SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A "LICENSE FOR PLAYING RIVAL GAMES OF POWER POLITICS IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES." HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT "POWERFUL COUNTRIES WILL DO THEIR UTMOST TO REFRAIN FROM CREATING NEW POCKETS OF TENSION IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD."

5. COMMENT: THE TIMES OF INDIA IN AN EDITORIAL FEBRUARY 21 REFLECTED CURRENT GOI RELUCTANCE TO ENDORSE THE ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL. TIMES SAYS THAT WHEREAS GIRI'S "REALISM" IS WELCOMED IN INDIA, ZONE OF PEACE PROPOSAL IGNORES "GEOPOLITICAL REALITIES." NOTING THAT NEIHL LIES SOUTH OF HIMALAYAS, EDITORIAL STATES THAT INDIAN PRESENCE IN NEPAL CANNOT THREATEN CHINA THE WAY THAT A CHINESE PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY THREATENS INDIA, GIVEN OPEN BORDER TO INDIA ON THE SOUTH. EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT "KATHMANDU SHOULD FORMULATE AND PRESENT ITS POLICY IN TERMS WHICH SHOW AN AWARENESS OF, AND RESPECT FOR, INDIA'S SUSCEPTIBILITIES...THE EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY DOES NOT MEAN CAUSING OFFENCE TO A COUNTRY WHICH NATURE AND HISTORSHHAVE MADE CLOSEST TO ONE'S OWN."

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